Possible Solutions for Creating JavaScript Fly-out Menus

Listed below are 4 popular solutions, along with brief descriptions, of products used to create JavaScript fly-out menus for Web pages and browser-based applications.

Each of these solutions is widely used throughout the Internet community. Each creates menus that work with both Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator.

Since fly-outs appear on layers, all have accessibility issues with mechanical readers. Except for Milonic, however, all can be triggered by a button or other object on the page that a mechanical reader would have access to.

HierMenusCentral.com (formally "DHTML Labs")
URL: http://www.webreference.com/dhtml/hiermenus
Price: $1495.00 for a single web site (not an entire domain)
Description:
This code was popular among State employees because it worked well and was free. This year, however, the creators have asked that developers pay an exorbitant licensing fee in order to use the code.

Pros:
- Easily integrates with other JavaScript and can be used with JavaScript include files

Cons:
- Price. Compared to the other tools listed here, HierMenus is very expensive
- Can't use graphic buttons, only text with color backgrounds
- Doesn't seem to be able to easily include graphics within buttons (like arrows or bullets)
- JavaScript does not contain many comments or definitions

Milonic DHTML Menu version 4
URL: http://www.milonic.com/menu/
Price:
- Single, per domain, license: $34.99
- Unlimited Corporate license: $899.99
Description:
Milonic looks and acts much like HierMenus, but it has more features and flexibility. It builds menus on layers.

Pros:
- Price is very reasonable
- Variety of options
- Code is well documented and commented, making it easy to customize

Cons:
- Difficult to have both a link and a fly-out menu for the same button
- Since menus reside entirely on layers, the fly-out submenus cannot easily be linked to buttons or objects on the HTML page itself
- Since menus reside entirely on layers, accessibility is even more of a problem than it is with the other menus described here

Sothink DHTMLMenu version 4.2
URL: http://www.sothink.com/webtools/dhtmlmenu/index.htm
Price:
- single user: $35.00
- Site license (each user within a 100-mile radius): $499.00
- World license (every corporate user in the world): $1498.00

Description:
Unlike HierMenus and Milonic, Sothink provides a GUI solution. An application helps developers to easily create, edit, and implement menus without having to deal with code.

Pros:
- Flexible
- Various ways to position a menu, so developer is not forced to use floating layers
- Includes plug-ins for Dreamweaver and FrontPage
- Can automatically create a JavaScript include file

Cons:
- Code is not commented or documented, so it is difficult to read or customize

Macromedia Fireworks MX
URL: http://www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks/
Price:
- Full Version Single License: $229.03
- Upgrade Version Single License: $116.98

Description:
Fireworks is actually a web graphics editor, that happens to include a good fly-out menu solution. Fireworks also uses a GUI editor that integrates well with Dreamweaver. It makes creating and editing menus easy.

Pros:
- Flexible
- Price is reasonable
- Easy to use
- Application does more than just edit menus

- Code is easy to read and customize, even though it is not documented or commented at all

Cons:
- Doesn't have as many effects or options as Milonic or Sothink

The information contained above was compiled in August of 2003 from product homepages and developer opinion.